

CONTRIBUTION OF TRAINING FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED IN MUSEUMS TO PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Purpose

An educational environment in a museum for the mentally retarded was designed in this study and the pre-service teachers were actively engaged in training of mentally retarded individuals in this process. The study intended to explore the contribution of training mentally retarded to pre-service teachers.

The main purpose of this study is to guide the pre-service teachers about the selection of educational environment for the training of the mentally retarded and organization of the materials to be used, have them understand the importance of special education, and create awareness about the mentally retarded. A museum was chosen as an educational environment in this study because training becomes more interesting in a museum with visual art activities which stimulate different intelligence areas and practices such as drama which promote concretization.

Implementation

The educational materials needed to be used for the mentally retarded individuals were developed and designed by the instructor who conducts studies on museum education. The pre-service teachers who took part in the activities were informed within the framework of the program. While the mentally retarded were doing the activities using the materials developed, the pre-service teachers gathered and socialized with these individuals, facilitated them and also they experienced how to use and implement these materials. Ten volunteer pre-service teachers studying in different departments of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University participated in the study. Ten mentally retarded individuals and their parents joined the two workshops carried out first in Muğla Sıtkı Koçman Cast Gallery and then in the Aphrodisias Museum.

Method

The study is a qualitative study. The contribution of museum education activity to the pre-service teachers was determined with semi-structured interviews. The data were obtained from the pre-service teachers. Moreover, the contribution of the study to the mentally retarded individuals was analysed. As the mentally retarded individuals had difficulty in expressing themselves orally or verbally, the parents' views about their observations were taken. Thematic content analysis was used for data analysis.

Discussion and Conclusion

After their evaluations, the pre-service teachers think that using museums as educational environment would make contributions both to healthy individuals and mentally retarded individuals. Moreover, they stated that the education carried out in the museum created an effective, positive, and social environment to engage the mentally retarded actively in the process and the visual materials and art activities especially drew the attention of them. The opinions of the parents are similar to those of the pre-service teachers and they stated that this process drew the attention of the mentally retarded, they became happy, it helped them socialize, and they were enthusiastic about participating in such activities.

As a result, it can be stated that the study carried out in museum environment has made contributions in pre-service teachers to understand the educational needs of the mentally retarded and become aware of how to make contributions to the training of mentally retarded.